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Thomas Troop – from weaver's son to vicar

by Francis Howcutt

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Old St Paul's church, Stamford by Richard Croft
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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Paul%27s_Church,_Stamford#/media/File:Old_St.Paul's_-_geograph.org.uk_-_600971.jpg

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Introduction

This article concerns the life of Thomas Troop (1645-1690), his parents, wives and children. Their stories include an example of how in that era local endowed schools sometimes made it possible for a person of relatively humble origins to study at university and progress to a higher-status profession than that of the previous generation of their family. The account also demonstrates how frequently early death stalked the ranks of infants and also took away the parents of young children.

Thank you to:

- Lincolnshire Archives and The National Archives for conserving and making accessible a vast range of original records.
- Cambridge University Library, FamilySearch, Internet Archive, Project Gutenberg, and Wikimedia Commons for making freely available online digitised versions of books, maps, newspapers and other resources.

When transcribing documents, the original spellings are kept. Where this is likely to assist navigation and understanding, text has been arranged into paragraphs. Except in direct quotations, the family surname is written here as 'Troop', which was the version used by Thomas himself.

At some points, Witham-on-the-Hill is abbreviated to Witham. Similarly, the village in Lincolnshire now known as Corby Glen is sometimes referred to simply as Corby (but beware - it is not to be confused with Corby in Northamptonshire, formerly a village but now a much larger town).

Internet links cited were checked on the date of this Introduction. If you find any that no longer work or whose destinations have changed for the worse, you may be able to find the material that the link previously led to by using the Wayback Machine.[2]

Thomas Troop, the vicar, was my 8x great grandfather. The chart in Appendix C shows his connection with Edwin Dalby, a son of Francis Dalby whose own biography has already been published.[3]

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26 January 2026
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[2] https://web.archive.org/
[3] *Francis Dalby of Blaby (1821-1902) and his family* by Francis Howcutt.
https://archive.org/details/1821-francis-dalby-blaby-v-03

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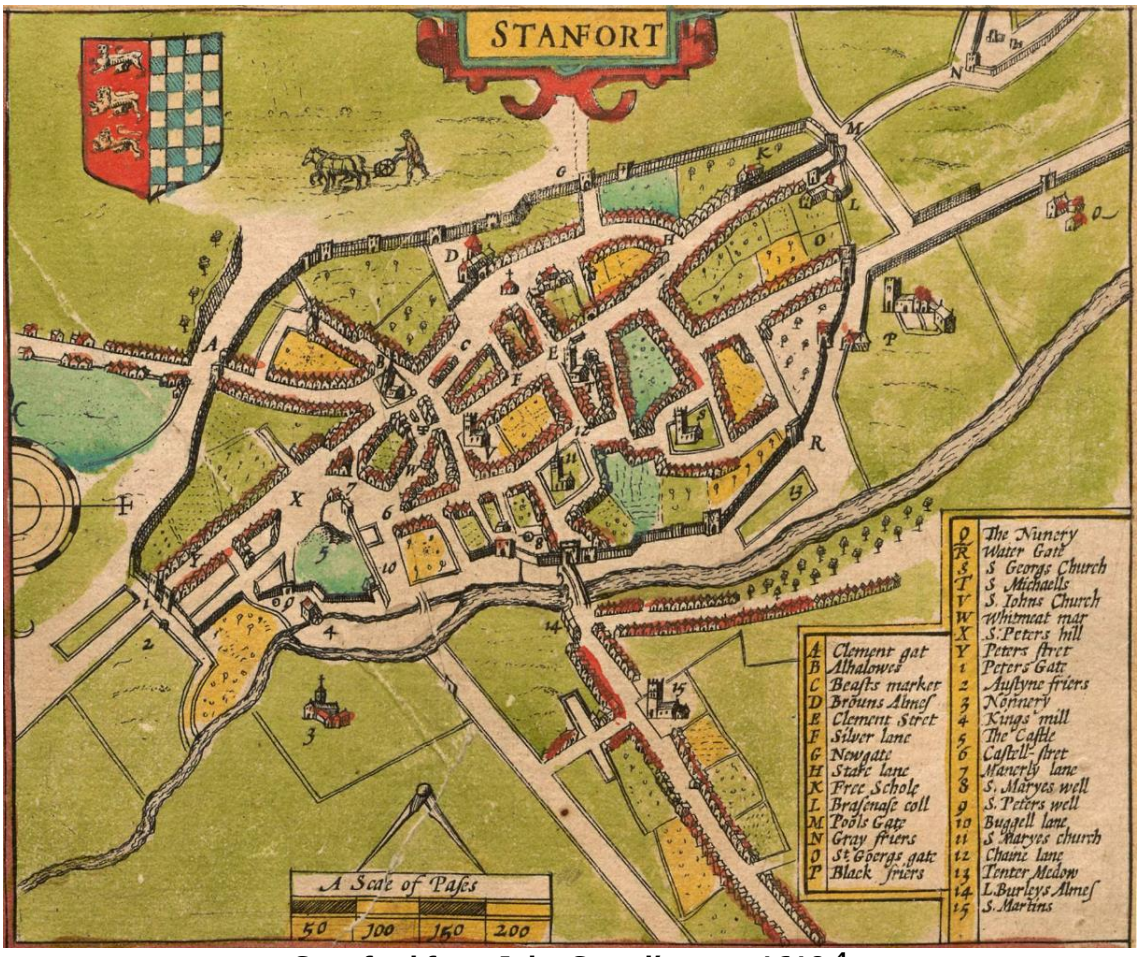
Stamford



Stamford from John Speed's map, 1610 [4]

Stamford, on the southern edge of Lincolnshire, was a borough and inland port situated where the Great North Road crossed the River Welland and ran through the centre of the town. The Great North Road was a major highway, leading from London ultimately as far as Edinburgh. Its population in the 17th century was less than 2,000 and the town was of less importance than in the Middle Ages, partly as a result of the silting up of the river. However, it remained a substantial market place with much passing trade.

The main educational establishment at Stamford was the Free Grammar School which had been founded as a chantry school in 1532 and, unlike most other schools of this type, survived the Reformation. By 1566, teaching had moved from the Corpus Christi chapel of St Mary's church to the remaining portion of the redundant St Paul's Church, on the north side of St Paul's Street. That building continued to be used as a school room until 1929, when it was converted into the school chapel. A picture of the building as it is now can be seen on the title page of this work.

[4] https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/PR-ATLAS-00002-00061-00001/52

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View of Stamford in 1719 by Peter Tillemans [5]

St Mary's, the church of one of the six parishes of 17th-century Stamford, is an imposing medieval edifice standing in the centre of the town at the north end of the east side of St Mary's Hill. Now a grade I listed building, St Mary's was the venue for the baptisms, marriages and burials of members of the Troop family that are noted below as taking place at Stamford.

St Mary's church, Stamford [6]

[5] Frontispiece to 'Academia tertia Anglicana by Francis Peck.
https://archive.org/details/b30452375/page/n7/mode/2up?ref=ol
[6] 'Stamford' by V B Crowther-Beynon in 'Memorials of Old Lincolnshire' edited by E.Mansel Sympson, page 170
https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65653/pg65653-images.html#STAMFORD

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Thomas Troop - father

Thomas, son of Thomas and Ann Troop, was baptised at St Mary's, Stamford on 11 May 1645. The father seems to have been well established in this compact parish, where he served as churchwarden for the two years commencing in 1637.[7]

No record has been found of Thomas senior earlier than 1629, but he may well have been connected in some way with 'Henry Toope', who married Isabell Pattersonn at St Mary's on 12 February 1625/6. It is possible that Thomas was a relative of William Troope, a husbandman of Tydd St Mary (about 31 miles east of Stamford), whose will was proved in 1593.

Thomas senior married at least three times.

- On 1 May 1629, to Audry Benison. Their oldest child, Rachel, was baptised in 1630 and their son Thomas in 1632. The children were buried within five days of each other in April 1635 and Audry followed them to the grave in August of the same year.
- Thomas and his wife Jane had only one known child - a daughter, also named Jane, who was baptised and buried on the same day on 2 February 1637/8. 'Jaine Troupe, the wife of Thomas Troupe' was buried on 11 September 1641.
- Thomas' last wife Ann gave birth to three children - John who was buried on 3 May 1644, only eight days after his baptism; Thomas (the subject of this article) and a daughter Ann who was buried on 23 December 1648, eleven months after her baptism.

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[7] The map is from a survey in 1886 and shows the extent of St Mary's parish. https://maps.nls.uk/view/114655140

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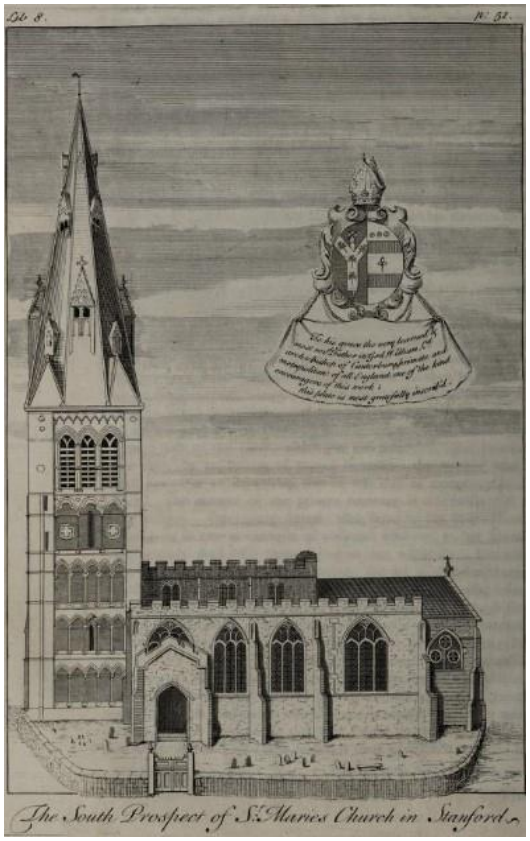
Details of the marriages of Thomas senior to Jane and to Ann are not known.

Thomas senior was buried on 15 April 1648, when his two children then surviving were both less than three years old. In his will dated 3 February 1647/8, Thomas appointed his wife Ann as executrix. He left 'the reversion of the Lease' and his goods to her, with legacies of 12 pence each to his children Thomas and Ann. The witnesses included Alderman John Bullock and Edward Cammock who was presumably the man of that name who was Alderman (the equivalent of a Mayor) at Stamford in 1643. Ann obtained probate on 20 April 1649 – just over a year after her husband's death. The text of the will is set out in Appendix A.

Stamford was not besieged during the Civil War and no major battles were fought in the vicinity. However, as the Town Bridge which led to the foot of St Mary's Hill was the only one in the area that crossed the Welland and part of a major highway, troops from both sides were to be seen travelling to and from the town. The Bridge had been built in the 12th century and consisted of five arches. The carriageway was only eight feet wide, with alcoves for pedestrians, as can be seen in the picture below. The building above the gate at the north end of the bridge had been rebuilt in 1558 and served as the town hall.

Town Bridge [8]



St Mary's church [9]

[8] https://archive.org/details/b30452375/page/n27/mode/2up?ref=ol
[9] https://archive.org/details/b30452375/page/n289/mode/2up?ref=ol

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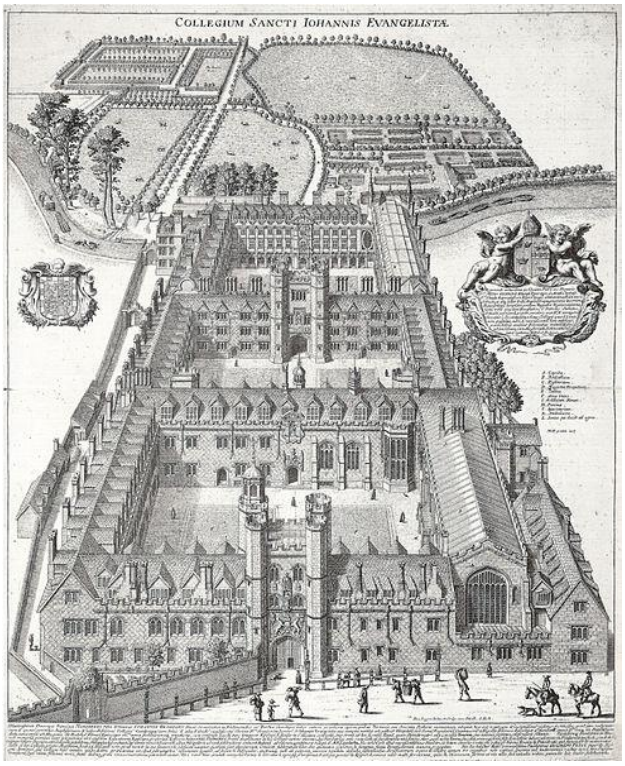
Thomas Troop – the vicar



St John's College, Cambridge, about 1685 by David Loggan [10]

Thomas senior was a weaver – a role for which literacy was not essential. Indeed, in 1638 he wrote the letter 'T' as his mark in the parish register and added the same mark at the foot of his will. However, formal education opened the door for his son to follow a very different career.

Reynard Herman, a native of Nijmegen, Holland and graduate of Pembroke College, Cambridge, was Head Master of Stamford School from 1657-1662.[11] It was under his direction that the younger Thomas Troop was educated there for three years before being admitted to St John's College, Cambridge as a sizar for Mr Fuller on 18 April 1661 at the age of 15.[12] Being a sizar entitled Thomas to support for the cost of attending the college, for which he would be expected to perform duties. His tutor was Mr Briggs. He graduated as a Bachelor of Arts in 1664/5 and was awarded the degree of Master of Arts in 1668.[13]

Thomas was ordained a deacon at Peterborough Cathedral on 21 May 1665 and on the following day licensed as curate of Clopton, Northamptonshire[14] - a parish some six miles east of Thrapston, with only fifteen households recorded in the hearth tax assessments for the year ending 25 March 1674[15]. Thomas' role at Clopton was temporary, as on 24 December 1665, he was made a priest and on the same day instituted as vicar of Corby (now Corby Glen), which is some 13 miles north of Stamford. The advowson (right to appoint the vicar) for that parish was then owned by John Thimelby[16]; it is not known whether Thimelby was otherwise connected with the Troop family.

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[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:St_John%27s_College,_Cambridge_by_Loggan_1690.jpg
[11] *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Part I, Volume II by John Venn & J A Venn (Cambridge 1922), page 357. https://archive.org/details/p1alumnicantabri02univuoft/p1alumnicantabri02univuoft/page/356/mode/2up
[12] *Admissions to the College of St John the Evangelist, Cambridge* Part 1, page 150 (Cambridge, 1882). https://archive.org/details/admissionstocol00goog/page/n193/mode/2up
[13] *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Part I, Volume IV by John Venn & J A Venn (Cambridge 1927), page 267. https://archive.org/details/p1alumnicantabri04univuoft/p1alumnicantabri04univuoft/page/266/mode/2up
[14] *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500*, Volume XIV by Henry Isham Longden, page 27. (Northampton, 1942). https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/viewer/39167/?offset=0#page=31&viewer=picture&o=info&n=0&q=

[15] The National Archives: E179/254/14.
[16] Clergy of the Church of England Database: https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/DisplayAppointment.jsp?CDBAppRedID=54410

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The parish church at Corby, dedicated to St John, is a grade I listed building.[17]

St John, Corby Glen

On 11 May 1666, Thomas was additionally appointed as schoolmaster in that parish.[18] The role may have been connected with preparations for establishing Read's Grammar school which, according to Historic England, was founded in 1669 with the older part of its building (now Willoughby Memorial Library and Art Gallery, Bourne Road, Corby) dating from 1673.[19]

It appears that Thomas did not remain at Corby long enough to teach in the Grammar school building, as on 19 December 1672, he was instituted as vicar of Witham-on-the-Hill, a parish about eight miles north of Stamford whose advowson was owned by Francis Wingfield and Philip Johnson.[20] Almost all residents there were at least nominally members of the Church of England as in 1676 it was reported that the parish of Witham was home to 314 conformists and three Roman Catholics with no Protestant dissenters.[21]

Witham vicarage stood to the north of the church. It was a three-storey house built of stone, with a thatched roof and cellars. The ground floor had a stone floor and included a hall, parlour, kitchen and stable with a lean-to on the north side. The first floor had two chambers and the second floor two garrets. In 1697, the vicarage was described as a mansion house with two barns containing eight bays of building.[22]

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[17] St John, Corby Glen by Acabashi, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Corby_Glen_St_John%27s_-_from_the_south-east.jpg
[18] Clergy of the Church of England Database: https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/DisplaySubscription.jsp?CDBSubscrID=34489
[19] https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1062848?section=official-list-entry
[20] Clergy of the Church of England Database: https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/DisplayAppointment.jsp?CDBAppRedID=48180
[21] *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition* edited by Anne Whiteman with the assistance of Mary Clapinson, pages 314 & 351.
[22] *A piece of the puzzle* (Witham-on-the-Hill Historical Society, 2000).

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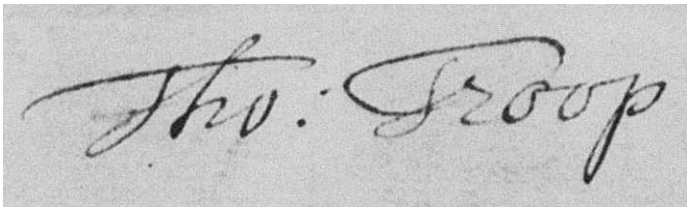
No record has been found of Thomas' first marriage or of any children from it but 'Ann wife of Tho: Troop Clerk' was buried at Witham on 19 November 1678.[23] He remained a widower for less than two years, as the bishops transcript for St Nicholas at Gunby, near Grantham[24] records the marriage on 15 July 1680 of 'Thomas Troope and Joane Hill … with a licence'. The bond for the marriage licence was given seven days earlier by Thomas Troop and Thomas Haddon of Witham, a husbandman.



In the bond, Joane Hill was described as a single woman of Stamford. By then, Thomas was 35 years old, nearly twice the age of his new bride who had been christened at Witham on 26 December 1661. Her father John Hill had been buried there in 1679. The Hill family was firmly rooted in that parish, with references to them appearing in its register as far back as the sixteenth century.

Thomas and Joan had eight children christened at Witham:

Name	Baptised	Married	Buried
Thomas	1681	n/a	1681/2
Abigail	1682	n/a	1703
Thomas	1684	n/a	1685/6
Ann	1685	n/a	1688
Grace	1686	n/a	1688
George	1687		
Harby (female)	1688/9	Maurice Sneath 1708	1745 Witham
Thomas	1689/90		

September 1688 was a particularly miserable month for the family, as two children, Grace and Ann, were buried then in the space of 11 days.

'Mr Thomas Troop Vicar' was buried at Witham on 20 May 1690, leaving his wife with the remaining four children - Abigail, George, Harby and Thomas - whose ages then ranged from about seven years to three months. Thomas' will was made only four days before his funeral and states he was already sick - a fact supported by his shaky signature at the end of that document. He left everything to Joan, whom he appointed as his sole executrix and she proved the will on 21 August of the same year. The text of the will is set out in Appendix B.

Presumably, Joan and her four surviving children had moved out of the vicarage by the time John Warburton was instituted as Thomas' successor on 14 September 1690.

[23] He was not the same person as the Thomas Troope who married Ann Courteens at Gainsborough on 19 February 1677/8 as the latter made a mark instead of signing when completing his marriage licence bond.
[24] Gunby St Nicholas about ten miles south of the centre of Grantham and should not be confused with Gunby St Peter, which is also in Lincolnshire.

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Joan Hill - wife

In 1680, Joan Hill was living at Stamford but had not been baptised there. Assuming she was at least 15 years old when she married and no more than 50 when her youngest child was baptised, she would have been born between 1651 and 1665. No suitable baptism has been found in the FindMyPast index to its scans of Lincolnshire registers or in the FreeReg index but the bishops transcript for Witham-on-the-Hill records the baptism of 'Jone daughter of John Hill' on 26 December 1661. There is no doubt that this was Thomas Troop's future bride because her paternal grandmother, who married Henry Hill in 1607, was Joan Harby and that surname was given as the christian name of one of Thomas and Joan's own daughters. Joan had probably not reached her 19th birthday when she married Thomas Troop - a 35-year-old widower - and would have been 40 years old when her last child was baptised.

On 15 August 1693, Joan married George Pagitt at Witham, where their children were christened:

Name	Baptised	Married	Buried
Susanna	1694/5		
Joanna	1696		
Robert	1697		
Ann	1698		
John	1700		
Richard	1701	n/a	1702

'George Pagit' was buried in 1706, leaving Joan to raise their five surviving children, as well as the three who by then remained from her first marriage. 'Joanna Pagit widow' was buried at Witham on 18 November 1719. She was about 58 years old and had outlived at least six of her 14 children as well as both her husbands.

St Andrew, Witham on the Hill [25]

[25] St Andrew, Witham on the Hill by Tim Heaton, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Church_of_St_Andrew,_Witham_on_the_Hill_-_geograph.org.uk_-_203015.jpg

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Harby Troop – daughter

A marriage record has been identified for only one of Joan's children - Harby Troop and her husband Maurice Sneath (1683-1727) had eight children between 1709 and 1725/6 and are forebears of a multitude of present-day descendants. Harby's brother George was almost certainly the father of the child whose baptism there on 3 January 1712/1713 is recorded in the parish register as 'John son of George Troop & Frances Gray (spurious)'.[26]

Witham on the Hill bishops transcript records the baptism on 21 March 1688/9 of 'Harby daughter of Thomas Troop clerke'. There are no christenings recorded in the Witham on the Hill parish register between 21 February 1687/1688 and 31 March 1689, but this statement is written in the otherwise blank page between the entries on those dates:

> *'This is to satisfy all those whom it may hereafter concern that in the time of Mr. Tho: Troop late Vicar of this Parish there was a neglect of entering into the Register the names of all those who were baptised in the year 1688. But I suppose there was a Copy of the names delivered into the Court at Lincoln, where any one (if necessity shall require it) may receive satisfaction.*
> *Aprill. 1st 1692. Will: Quarles Vicar'.*

Witham on the Hill parish register records the marriage on 19 October 1708 of 'Maurice Sneath & Harby Troop'. They were the parents of these children baptised at Witham:

Name	Baptised	Married	Buried
Richard	1709	Amy Barber 1737	1766 Witham
Maurice	1710/11		
Thomas	1712	Mary Reddish 1741	1744 Witham
William	1715		
William	1716	n/a	1730/1 Witham
John	1717		
	1719[27]		
(male)	1720/1 or 1721/2[28]		
Robert	1721		
Harby (female)	1725/6	Edward Fearey 1745/6	1767 Thurlby

Witham on the Hill bishops transcript records the burial on 2 November 1727 of 'Maurice Sneath'. This certainly relates to Harby's husband, as their last child was christened in 1725/1726 and the burial of 'William son of Harby Sneath' was recorded at Witham in 1730/1731, indicating that by then she was a widow.

Witham on the Hill parish register records the burial on 19 November 1737 of 'Harby Sneath'.

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[26] 'Spurious' means born out of wedlock.
[27] Witham on the Hill parish register and its bishops transcript for 1719 do not contain all the same entries. Amongst those in the bishops transcript but not in the parish register is '.....of Maurice Sneath Decemb 3'. the first part of the entry having been lost.
[28] Witham on the Hill parish register does not record any baptisms of children of Maurice Sneath between 23 October 1717 and 28 October 1721. However, the bishops transcript (which is not fully consistent with the register) has a partially lost entry that reads '.... son of Maurice Sneath 4 March', the year probably being 1720/1 but possibly 1721/2.

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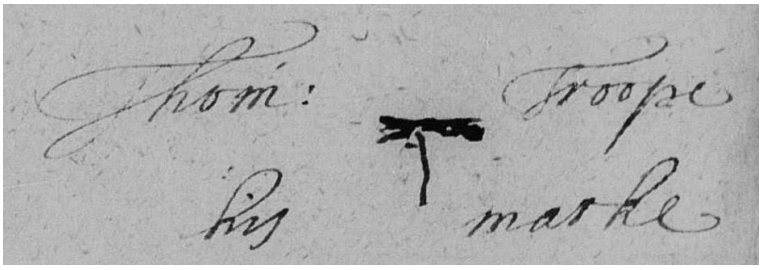
Appendix A: Will of Thomas Troop, probate 1649

(Lincoln Consistory Court, 1649, number 95)

The parish register of St Mary, Stamford records the burial on 15 April 1648 of 'Thomas Troupe'. The text of the original will is:

In the name of God Amen
I Thomas Troope of Stamford in ye County of Lincoln Weaver being in perfect sense & memorie doe make and ordaine this my last will & testament in manner and forme following:
I bequeath my soule unto Allmightie god hopeing to be saved by ye merrits and passion of my saviour & Redeemer Jesus Christ
Item My body to be buried in ye Church-yard of St Maries in Stamford aforesaid
Item I give to my sonne Tho. Troope - 12d
Item I give to my daughter Ann Troope - 12d
Item And for the reversion of the Lease and my goods mooveable and unmooveable I bequeath unto my good wife Ann Troope whome I make my sole Executrice shee paying my debts and discharging ye funerall Rites
Wittness my hand Feb: 3 Ao. D. 1647 [3 February 1647/8]
Thom. Troope (T) his mark
Wittnes to this
John Bullock Alderman (signed)
Edward Cammock (signed)
James Willoughbie (signed)

Probate was granted at Stamford 20 April 1649, executrix sworn.



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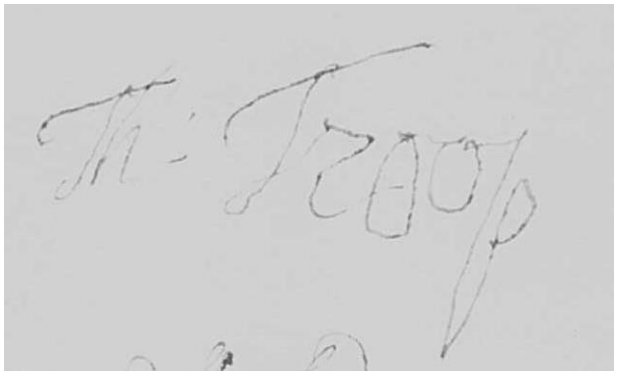
Appendix B: Will of Thomas Troop, probate 1690
(Lincoln Consistory Court, 1690, number 11)

The parish register of Witham on the Hill records the burial on 20 May 1690 of 'Mr Thomas Troop Vicar'. The text of the original will is:

> *In the Name of God Amen this 16 Day of May Ano: Dom: 1690 I Thomas Troope of Witham on the Hill in ye County of Lincolne Clerk being sick of body But of good memory praised be God doe make This My Last will following That is to say*
> *first And principally I Resigne my soul Into The Mercifull Hands of Almighty God my Creator Hopeing Through The Merrits of my Blessed Saivour To obtaine Remission of all my sins & my Body I Committ to The earth To be Decently Buried by my Executrix herein after Named And as for My worldly goods The Lord hath Lent me I dispose of Them All And singular unto My Dearly Beloved wife Joan Troope To the Intent That Shee shall Therewith Bring Up & provide for My Children as my said goods & Chattells will enable*
> *And Also I doe make & ordaine My Dear wife Joan Troope Sole executrix of This My Last will & Testament*
> *In Wittness whereof I have here Unto sett my hand And seale This present 16 day of May in The Year of our Lord one Thousand six hundred & Ninety 1690*
> *signed sealed & published in the presence of*
> *Sarah Christian (her mark)*
> *Richd. Sneath (signed)*
> *Th. Troop (signed)*

Probate was granted at Stamford on 21 August 1690, executrix sworn.



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Appendix C: Descent of Mary Fearey from Thomas Troop senior

Thomas TROOP married buried 1648 Stamford St Mary	**Ann** buried 1678 Witham on the Hill
Thomas TROOP baptised 1645 Stamford St Mary married 1680 Gunby by Grantham buried 1690 Witham on the Hill	**Joan HILL** baptised 1661 Witham on the Hill buried 1719 Witham on the Hill
Harby TROOP baptised 1688/9 Witham on the Hill married 1708 Witham on the Hill buried 1737 Witham on the Hill	**Maurice SNEATH** baptised 1683 Witham on the Hill buried 1727 Witham on the Hill
Harby SNEATH baptised 1725/6 Witham on the Hill married 1745/6 Spalding buried 1767 Thurlby	**Edward FEAREY** born c.1702 buried 1763 Spalding
Robert FEAREY baptised 1757 Thurlby married 1777 West Deeping buried 1834 Market Deeping	**Mary ROUSE** buried 1781 Market Deeping
Robert FEAREY baptised 1777 West Deeping married 1801 Heckington buried 1816 Great Hale	**Catherine GREETHAM** baptised 1778 Heckington buried 1837 Great Hale
Anthony FEAREY born c.1801 Corby, Lincolnshire married 1823 Heckington buried 1874 Heckington	**Mary FLATTERS** born 1803 Langtoft dies 1861 Heckington
William FEAREY born 1831 Heckington married 1853 Heckington died 1880 Swineshead, Lincolnshire	**Ann COLBY** baptised 1832 Heckington died 1913 Northampton
Mary FEAREY born 1866 Heckington married 1888 Leicester died 1910 Brixton	**Edwin DALBY** born 1864 Birmingham died 1936 Streatham